

NCSPS: Education and Social Change

by Bel Kaufman — 1966

The National Committee for Support of the Public Schools is a committee of citizens concerned enough about public education to work for its support in communities throughout the United States. The Fourth Annual Conference of the NCSPS, held in April 1966, assembled a number of representative speakers to discuss the theme, "Education and Social Change." We have selected for presentation here some of the discussion which took place during the two day meeting, especially at the session on "Teaching in America" and the one dealing with "The Problem of National Standards."

The National Committee for Support of the Public Schools is a committee of citizens concerned enough about public education to work for its support in communities throughout the United States. The Chairman of the NCSPS Executive Committee is Mrs. Agnes E. Meyer, who says that community support of authority, "even that of the President, must be created to arouse interest and support for federal leadership, however capable." She speaks of the particular significance of salvaging "the independence of the individual and of the individual school systems" at a moment when federal planning and federal spending are increasing so dramatically. "That explains," she points out, "the importance of our nationwide membership, represented as it is in every state in the Union. It is for them to make a reality of the program presented by our federal leadership...."

The Fourth Annual Conference of the NCSPS, held in April 1966, assembled a number of representative speakers to discuss the theme, "Education and Social Change." We have selected for presentation here some of the discussion which took place during the two day meeting, especially at the session on "Teaching in America" and the one dealing with "The Problem of National Standards." Because of space limitations, we cannot reprint the complete text of the Proceedings; but, although there has been some arbitrariness in our choices, we have tried to make our selections with the special interests of our readers in mind. Also, we have tended to select the kinds of statements not ordinarily available to the RECORD with the hope of extending a universe of discourse which can never be wide enough.

To choose, of course, is to exclude. Such omissions as the keynote address by Richardson Dilworth, President of the Philadelphia School Board, and the address given by Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare John W. Gardner do not signify a lack of regard for their relevance and importance. Mr. Dilworth said some significant things about "the reshaping of the urban school's mission"; and, in responding to him, Professor Philip Hauser (of the University of Chicago) threw down a determined gauntlet to Boards of Education, school superintendents, and various apathetic citizens' groups for lagging behind in their recognition of the educational inadequacies demonstrated in recent years by the Negro revolt. Paul Ylvisaker, of the Ford Foundation, issued a call for indigenous political leadership to meet the problems of public education; and Secretary Gardner advised the audience to concentrate on a few meaningful activities consistently—to avoid "the glancing blow."

The 3rd Session, on "The Citizen and Public Policy," consisted of five panels and involved such people as Professor Frank Riessman (a contributor to our November issue), Dean TheodoreSizer of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Professor S. M. Miller of New York University, Superintendent Herman R. Goldberg of the Rochester schools, and Superintendent Grant Venn of Wood County, West Virginia.

The panels were followed by the banquet session, chaired by Jules Feiffer, during which the following statements were made on "Teaching in America":

Bel Kaufman

Most of my life, I have been a teacher in the public high schools of New York. I'm like the Puerto Rican boy in my book* who was asked to play the role of judge in a class playlet, and who, when challenged on court procedure, says with quiet authority, "I ought to know. I *been*."

As far as the high schools of New York are concerned—I've been. I've run the gamut of every kind of school from the toughest to the so-called best. But whatever the class, whatever the student—whether he was a window smasher or an apple polisher—each one, it seems to me, in his own private wilderness, was saying, was crying, "Listen to me, look at me, pay attention, care about me." And that is one thing that teachers—burdened as we are with mountainous clerical work and with miles of paper, strangled by red tape, involved in nonteaching assignments, like patrolling the lunch rooms—have no time to do. One of the saddest notes I received was from a girl who said, "I'll never forget you and the time you talked to me on the subway." And frequently the subway is the only place teacher and student can make that person-to-person contact. In the public schools of our country, it seems to me, we are all

shortchanged. There is no villain—except perhaps the system itself. There are the frustrated teachers who have no time to teach, no place to teach, no equipment, no dignity. Then there is the helpless administration—with pressures from above and from below and from the side—involved in trivia in triplicate, sending down directives from some gigantic mimeographing machine. Oh, they're familiar to you. "Disregard previous notices about disregarding bells." "Bells will ring at 3:05 sharp. This, however, is uncertain." "Excuse Peter from being late. He was kept in the late room to make up his lateness." "Teachers must not punch each other out." Or, "Detained by me for going up the down staircase and subsequent insolence."

This, of course, is the genesis of my title. The most amusing variation of my title appeared in the Russian newspaper, *Pravda*. It gave my book a whole new dimension: *Upside Down on a Staircase*.

We are involved, we teachers, with percentile curves and marks and reports and pupil personality profiles. But we know, we really know, that that is not what education is. It is not a product. It is not amassing information. It's a constant process. It is not achieving something; it is getting there. It is a child tying his shoelaces. His mother could do it better and faster, if the shoelace itself and the tie itself were the important things. But it's the attempt and the frustration and the beginning again that is important. It's questions being asked for which there may be no answers. It's a constant seeking for something which one may never find, and from that first tentative shoelace to the ultimate unanswerable. Why, this is a never-ending pursuit.

While this is difficult to achieve in the public schools, I am not offering any solution; that would be pontifical or glib. But I think that if there is any solution it must begin and end with the teacher. We should get the most talented and gifted teachers into our school systems, train them and give them the maximum opportunity to teach—i.e. fewer classes, smaller classes, more equipment, no non-teaching assignments, and a clerical staff to do things that highly-trained people shouldn't have to do.

* Up the Down Staircase

Ralph Ellison

When I first went to Douglas School in Oklahoma City, which was the main school for Negro children, I had to walk across a viaduct. Being six years old and very dubious about the whole adventure, I found myself almost crying as I looked down through the planks and could see trains and railroad tracks below. (I had to cross the Rock Island tracks there.) Also, in order to get to this school I had to walk through a manufacturing district of warehouses and a red-light district. I'm not complaining, just describing terrain. But somehow I am connected with that public school and shall be for the rest of my life. Like most Negro schools in the South and Southwest, my school suffered from a lack of money. It also suffered from a deficiency of prepared teachers. That's one part.

The other part of it (and this is something I discovered years later, after I became a man and began trying to unscramble some of the meaning of what had happened during that particular period**) was that it also had a few very good teachers. And these teachers represented a continuity of that stream of New England education which had as its carriers those young people who went South during the Reconstruction to staff the schools for Negro children. Some of the people who taught me had been taught by those who had gone South and were still alive. That stream of education, bearing with it overtones of the true history of a repressed period of American life, got into the Negro schools—and to a certain extent this was compensating. And just to keep the record straight, the Negro schools in Oklahoma City during the twenties taught a course in the history of the Negro American. This was not usually done, and it isn't usually done today, I understand.

I stand here tonight supporting the public schools, even the distorted and bad public schools—not out of sentimentality but because I feel that the most important impact ideas can have upon a child comes at a time when he is close to home. I'm not talking about "the neighborhood concept." I'm talking about the wonderful thing which occurs when you learn a new idea, when you have a new intellectual experience, and it becomes mingled with all the intimate associations, with all the emotions, that have accrued around the objects and the people and the climate within which you live.

I am very happy, for instance, that I discovered T. S. Eliot and Joyce and Pound in a school where they weren't taught. I'm glad, because Pound and Joyce and Eliot and a number of others will be forever associated in my mind with Macon County, Alabama—with the weather there, with the wisteria and the spring, with the hot nights, and with the anguish that gets into an adolescent heart when the moon is low and the sky is deep magenta. Now the ideas I learned in public schools ring with memories, they ring with smells, they ring with conflict, they ring with all the incongruities of an environment wherein the house of education was almost adjoining the house of prostitution.

The public schools form a center and if they work well (in fact, it's almost impossible for them not to work) they do something else. They prepare individuals who, through their own awareness of their own particular backgrounds, are able to keep the old American values alive and who can be critical of them and can feed into the consciousness of the nation, a better sense of who we are and what we are, and what we have to do to come up to the standards we set for ourselves some one hundred sixty years ago.

**Invisible Man

Leo Rosten

I'm entirely a product of the worst schools in the city of Chicago (up to college) and I loved them, and I learned a great deal from them. But American public schools will never, never, never be as good as they ought to be—for a simple reason. In a free society, which means a society that asks questions and argues and is discontented, the standard must always be higher than current performance. American schools have room for improvement about as great as that of American hospitals. And their need to improve is almost as great as, say, American automobiles.

Let me tell you the things I wish I had not been taught—because these are things I had to unlearn at great pain. First: that facts speak for themselves. Madness, madness. Facts don't speak at all and are utterly meaningless unless you interpret them and arrange them. I was taught that you should always tell the truth. A horrible thought. Life would be unbearable if we went around telling each other the truth. I've made myself very unpopular by saying to people, "You're wrong." And they were. Or, "You'll never make it." And they didn't.

I wish I had never been taught that during an election it is your duty to vote— that it doesn't matter whom you vote for, get out and vote. Madness! If you don't know whom to vote for, don't vote. Let the people who are taking the trouble to find out, vote. It is democratic heresy to vote stupidly and blindly. I wish above all (and this is a heresy so horrid that I appeal to you not to think me wicked) that neither I nor all the generations since had been taught that the purpose of life is to be happy. I wish that mothers wouldn't tell you that all they want is for their children to be "happy"—because if you want that, for God's sake feed them tranquilizers. I wish I had been taught that what one learns is learned at great pain, that the purpose of life and of living is not to be happy. It's to be useful, it's to be honorable, it's to be compassionate, it's to matter—to have it make some difference that you lived at all.

I wish we would learn to meet absolutism of any kind with skepticism, and even idealism with very great care. We must be skeptical in this world of words promised, even by virtuous men. It is one of the ironies of history that the cynics have done relatively little harm compared to those who were sure they were right. We must learn to be strong enough to be gentle. We must learn that life will always have unbearable stretches of loneliness and uncertainty and pain. And we may as well stop running around insisting that everyone understand us, because you will never be completely understood by anyone, no matter how much they love you or try—and you can never completely understand anyone else, no matter how much you love them or want to or try.

So we must learn to moderate our demands on other people and on ourselves. We learn to have the courage to live without easy answers and without that scourge of mankind—absolutes. We must seek escape from the straitjackets of conformity, knowing with Emerson that "Whosoever would be a man must be a non-conformist."

Above all, I wish we could teach people early that you can only meet life in a series of tentative and impermanent approximations; that the final goal may never be reached; that the last truths are probably unknowable—but that life holds nothing more precious than the sacred process by which you stretch your mind and your heart.

"The Problem of National Standards" was introduced by Congressman James Scheuer of New York, who explained the present concern with testing and criteria by saying:

I think it is because we have found out (not this last year or the year before, but surely since World War II) that in a rapidly changing and evolving urban civilization—one that places enormous new demands upon workers and upon citizens, one that has been burdened with mass migration of an impoverished, unskilled, illiterate population from the southern part of the United States and from Puerto Rico and Mexico to our northern urban centers—we have found that, under these burdens, the public school system, or at least a large part of the public school system, isn't doing the job.

He went on to qualify this by asserting that the school system is succeeding well "in our affluent suburban communities." But, he said, it is failing "in the great downtown ghettos" failing in such a way that "basic structural alterations" are required. In order to effect such alterations, more must be known, and priorities must be established. "Now, obviously, if we are going to be selective, if we are going to have a descending order of priority, we must have some kind of rule of thumb, we must have some kind of help and assistance in our decision-making. We must have an assessment and criteria of some kind."

At this point, he introduced Dr. Ralph W. Tyler, Director of the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford, who is Chairman of the Exploratory Committee on Assessing the Progress of Education, appointed in 1964 by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Ralph W. Tyler

The need for dependable information on the progress of education is now widely recognized. Because education has become the servant of all our purposes, its effectiveness is of general public concern. The educational tasks now faced require many more resources than have thus far been available, and they must be wisely used to produce the maximum results. To make these decisions, dependable information about the progress of education is essential, otherwise we scatter our efforts too widely and fail to achieve our goals. Yet we do not now have the necessary comprehensive and dependable data. We have reports on numbers of schools, buildings, teachers, and pupils, and about the moneys expended; but we do not have sound and adequate information on educational results.

Because dependable data are not available, personal views, distorted reports, and journalistic impressions are the sources of public opinion, and the schools are frequently attacked and frequently defended without having necessary evidence to support either claim. This situation will be corrected only by a careful, consistent effort to obtain valid data to provide sound evidence about the progress of American education.

In recognition of this need, Carnegie Corporation of New York, a private foundation, in 1964 appointed an Exploratory Committee on Assessing the Progress of Education. I was asked to serve as Chairman. The Committee's assignment is to confer with teachers, administrators, school board members, and others concerned with education to get advice on the way in which such a project may be constructively helpful to the schools and avoid possible injuries. The Committee is also charged with the development and try-out of instruments and procedures for assessing the progress of education. The Committee has been working on these assignments for nearly two years.

The discussions with administrators, curriculum specialists, teachers, and school board members clearly recommended that the initial assessment include more than the 3 R's and that it ultimately cover the range of important educational tasks of the modern schools. In harmony with this suggestion, we have contracted with agencies to construct assessment exercises in the fields of reading and the language arts, science, mathematics, social studies, citizenship, fine arts, and vocational education. In subsequent years, other important areas will be included.

Because the purpose of the assessment is to provide helpful information about the progress of education that can be understood and accepted by public-spirited lay citizens, some new procedures are being developed. In each field, scholars, teachers, and curriculum specialists have formulated statements of the objectives which they believe faithfully reflect the contributions of that field and which the schools are seriously seeking to attain. For each of these major objectives, prototype exercises have been constructed which, in the opinion of scholars and teachers, give students an opportunity to demonstrate the behavior implied by the objective. These lists of objectives and prototype exercises, which help to define them, have been reviewed by a series of panels of public-spirited citizens living in various parts of the country in cities, towns, and villages.

Each panel spent two days reviewing the material and making a judgment about each objective in terms of the questions: "Is this something important for people to learn today? Is it something I would like to have my children learn?" This process resulted in some revisions of the original listing of objectives and some eliminations. However, the procedure was designed to insure that every objective being assessed is:

- (1) considered important by scholars
- (2) accepted as an educational task by the school
- (3) deemed desirable by leading lay citizens

This should help to eliminate the criticism frequently encountered with current tests in which some item is attacked by the scholar as representing shoddy scholarship, by school people as something not in the curriculum, or by prominent laymen as being unimportant or technical trivia.

A national assessment to identify kinds of progress being made in education, and problems and difficulties arising, will not be very meaningful unless separate measures are obtained for populations within the total country—populations which vary among themselves and thus present different degrees and kinds of progress and different problems to be solved. The particular populations that need to be treated separately may change over the years ahead, but for some time, age, sex, socio-economic status, geographic location, and rural-urban-suburban differences will probably be significant. Hence, the present plan is to assess a probability sample for each of 192 populations defined by the following subdivisions: boys and girls; four geographic regions; four age groups (nine, thirteen, seventeen, and adult); three divisions by urban, suburban, rural classifications; and two socio-economic levels.

The fact that populations are to be assessed, and not individuals, makes it possible to extend the sampling of exercises far beyond that of an individual test in which

each person takes the entire test. It may be that a comprehensive assessment would require so many exercises, that if it were to be taken by one person he would need ten hours, or more to complete them. With a population sample, 20 persons, each spending 30 minutes, would together take all the exercises. In this case, a population of 10,000 persons would furnish a sample of 500 for each of the assessment exercises, and no one would have given more than 30 minutes of his time.

Assuming that an assessment would be made every three to five years in order to ascertain the kinds of progress taking place, it is very unlikely that many of those individuals who participated in the earlier assessments would be involved in any of the subsequent ones. Hence, from the point of view of the child or adult, no serious demand would be made on his time. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the children taking exercises in later years would be drawn from the same classrooms as the earlier ones. Therefore, the demands made upon the teacher in releasing a child for half-an-hour will be minimal. The assessment, though costly, should be feasible and should involve little or no inconvenience to individuals or to schools. This project is encountering some difficulties in getting itself understood. It is being confused with a nationwide, individual testing program, and several common fears are

expressed by those who make this confusion. They note that tests used in a school influence the direction and amount of effort of pupils and teachers. In this way, if national tests do not reflect the local educational objectives, pupils and teachers are deflected from their work. This criticism does not apply to the assessment project because no individual student or teacher can make a showing. No student will take more than a small fraction of the exercises. No scores will be obtained on his performance. He will not be assessed at any later time and can gain no desired end, like admission to college or a scholarship.

A second fear is that such an assessment enables the Federal Government to control the curriculum. This is also a misunderstanding. The objectives to be assessed are those accepted by teachers and curriculum specialists as goals toward which they work. They have been reviewed by lay leaders throughout the country so as to include only aims deemed important by public-spirited citizens. This project will report on the extent to which children, youth, and adults are learning things considered important by both professional school people and the informed public. It promises to provide constructive information that will guide the formulation of sound public policies.

Congressman Scheuer then introduced Martin Mayer, author of the schools and other books relevant to education.

Martin Mayer

Dr. Tyler says something that gives me the horrors: that is, if a question comes up where the educators can say, "That is not in the curriculum," you can't ask it. And meanwhile, if the public thinks it is trivial, you can't ask it. And if the scholars think it is of no relevance to scholarship, you can't ask it. When you put these three criteria together, and you put a lot of people to work making up statements of objectives that they can all agree on, I think you have a guarantee of triviality and obsolescence in the list of objectives that you are making, once you get beyond the basic skills level. If we must do this sort of thing, why not have three different tests—one developed with school people, one developed with university scholars, and one developed with the lay people—to see how well we are doing with presumably divergent goals? You might know something when you were done with that. If you have to make up one list that reflects all three, I can't see the value of this sort of consensus. All other things being perfect, I can't see what the value of it is.

Second, how will we know what we have, once we have it? Somebody during the radio days, when Goodman Ace and his wife had a radio broadcast, ran into Goodman Ace on the street and said to him, "Hello, Goodie. How is Jane?" He said, "She is all right, if you like Jane." (Laughter)

Now, whether one likes it or not (and I don't much), there is some sense to a scheme which sets up a national norm and measures an individual against it. But by what standard do you measure a national norm? Where is your reference point? This periodic assessment that we are going to make—how do you keep a reference standard for the population as a whole? What significance are we talking about here? Are you going to give the same test to 2 million people every three years, with secure keys? No, sir. Don't you keep this one secret. This is a matter of legitimate public interest. This test has to be published, and the answers which the testers think are the right answers have to be made known to the public, so the community can say, as a whole, "What sort of castor oil is this, what are we doing here?"

So you will have to make a new test. You really must. And I hope Congress will insist on this. We have tests with secure keys now about kids' psychological adjustments—which is one of the worst scandals in this country—and I don't see how you avoid cheating.

In New York City we have been big on tests, and the junior high school principals were, for a long time, in a situation where the way you got brownie points downtown was if the reading score went up more than the IQ indicated during the three years that the kids were in junior high school. It was a 40-minute test in the ninth grade, but you gave him an hour to do it. He looked better. You looked better. That is what counted. So every high school in New York completely re-tested every kid who came in, because they knew no test scores from the junior high school had any meaning at all, because typically the schools cheated.

Now we have a national assessment scheme run by educators to convince the Congress that it is getting its money's worth, with no known reference standard. Is there anyone in this room who can imagine that from one three-year period to the next these scores might conceivably go down? Could this happen? No, it couldn't happen. You know perfectly well it couldn't happen. This is an infinitely manipulable system. Ralph is an honest man, but even Ralph doesn't live forever. And even he may not know what is being done.

Nancy Larrick, who writes for the Saturday Review and other publications and is a well-known expert on children's literature, was next.

Nancy Larrick

What can a national assessment of education tell us about children and young people in these deprived situations? It seems to me it is like assessing the yield from worn-out land and comparing it with that from soil that has been properly cared for and fertilized. We know that if the right ingredients are not provided in the soil, we get poor crops. The proposed assessment will show that the

same thing holds true in education. We know that children without books read less well, and less eagerly, than those who have books. We know that children from deprived situations are less likely to flourish physically, intellectually, and socially, than those who have had greater opportunities.

On any program of national testing or national assessment we know that children from suburban schools will make a better showing than those from the slums. Why not? For the most part, the suburban children have better food and rest. They are in smaller classes. They have better teaching materials. Their teachers understand their interests, their goals, speak the same language. Whereas children from the poverty-racked families, with less than \$2000 income, will surely make poorer scores. Again, why not? There is no money in those homes for proper food, much less for magazines and books. Family life is tense and uncertain. At school these children face what seems to be a hostile world, where the language and the customs are different. How can those youngsters learn?

The proposed national assessment is not seeking what statisticians call input data, meaning in the case of the schools: the training of teachers; the size of classes; the nature, availability, and use of teaching aids; the size of the school library and whether the books circulate; the climate for learning. It is seeking to evaluate what Mr. Keppel said—how much the kids know.

This, to me, is a major weakness in the proposed assessment plan, for it seeks to measure the outcome of student performance, not to assess the factors that contribute to the outcome. To be a real assessment, not simply a massive, random, sample testing program, it should certainly report on the whole picture—for example, how well teachers are teaching; how well principals are helping teachers and children; how well superintendents are cultivating the creative leadership of teachers, principals, school board members, and parents; how well school board members are serving children as distinguished from serving the tight-fisted taxpayer; and how well the community is serving children of all economic levelsthrough schools and other community agencies.

I would like to ask, too, how well the teachers colleges are teaching school administrators and classroom teachers to approach education creatively and humanely.

I think we would learn more from assessing the performance of the adults who are responsible for our children than from questioning children about how much they know. But no one has the nerve to force a random sampling of adults to complete a 30-minute segment of an objective test. (Applause) Or a 30-minute interview in order to evaluate their way of helping children. How then can we do itto children and young people and only to them?

I think any nationwide project which is intended to contribute ultimately to quality education must be evaluated in the light of major soft spots in our educational program today. Will the proposed national assessment help to eradicate, to overcome certain weaknesses—or will it encourage their spread?

Let me mention three which concern me particularly. To me these are major weaknesses in our education program at all levels. One is the tendency to stress isolated facts and slight the child's understanding and commitment.

Dr. Rhoda Dorsey, a history professor at Goucher College, was telling me recently that in freshman history classes nowadays, the students come in, as she put it, "knowing more facts than I will ever know." But when they start discussions, she says, "I can immediately tell whether these people studied a textbook written by an old New Dealer, or a New Goldwater Republican, because these youngsters, while they have gotten facts, have accepted uncritically the bias, the point of view of either the teacher or the textbook writer."

Now, these are students who for twelve years have been taking more tests than any generation previously. The ones that Educational Testing Service refers to as

STT's—Sophisticated Test Takers.

The second weak spot that I am concerned about is in our learning, which is over-compartmentalized. We study reading in one compartment, but literature in another. Even in science, in the elementary school, children will study plant life here and animal life there, without any understanding that there just might be some relation between the two.

The third weakness I would like to mention is our increasing reliance on gadgets and devices—instead of what I think of as the dynamics of learning. You doubtless heard the story from Scotland, where a group of youngsters, classified by their i i-plus exam, had their scores run through the computer, which got a minor case of indigestion. The computer mistakenly classified 2500 "A" (academic) students as "B" (vocational) and labeled 2500 "B" students as "A"s. So the "A" students were sent to the vocational program and they behaved as the vocational students are supposed to behave at the "B" level. The "B" students went to the "A" program and they behaved like "A" students and took the academic program. From the report I had from a British teacher at the NCTE last year, it took two years before the administration found out that the computer got mixed up. The children performed the way the teachers—and the machine— said they would. Thus the tyranny of testing was compounded by the tyranny of labeling.

By the nature of its concept and structure, the national assessment, as proposed, it seems to me, will tend to perpetuate these shortcomings in American education. It will not permit one child to be compared with another, thank God, or maybe thank Ralph Tyler, but it will publicly label starvation-level children as intellectual failures. It will bring prestige, political power, and ultimately federal money to strengthen the fact-packed, segmented, mechanized kind of education that is more concerned with averages than

individuals. Measuring "how much the kids know" alludes, it seems to me, mainly to those phenomena of their physical environments which come under the heading of knowledge. But the child or the man has another environment of equal significance to education. This is his innerlife, emanating from the things of the spirit.

John Holt was then introduced. He is the author of how children fail and presently teaching in a private school in New England.

John Holt

I think, first of all, we have to keep in mind what the purpose of all this is. If there is any reason for all this testing, it's presumably to help us teach better or educate better. And I think of the old story, perhaps too well known to be worth repeating, about the farmer who was asked by a county agent if he was going to come to a conservation meeting, and he said, "No, why should I? The agent said, "To help you learn to farm better." And he said, "Hell, I don't farm as good as I know how right now."

I want to second very strongly what Miss Larrick says. We are not really mystified about a lot of the things that we need to do. We don't at this moment need a whole lot of new information to know what needs to be done in big city schools, and so forth. I think her point about considering not what children supposedly know, but the environments in which their learning takes place would be much more to the point.

In all that has been said about education here, I have gotten a feeling which is a little difficult to put into words, but I will put it this way. Generally speaking, we talk as if education and our school systems were some kind of gigantic machine, and as if teachers were a kind of factory labor running this machine, and as if children were a sort of inert raw material which gets run through it and processed into some kind of product, which society thinks it needs or wants.

I don't think we are going to make any progress as long as we think of education this way. I am a school teacher, and in the past months, as a result of my book, I have done a good deal of talking to other school teachers. And you have no idea how much the average school teacher, who ought to be at the summit of the educational profession, feels like a buck private in a very large army. They say to me, "We would like to do better, but what can we do. We are hemmed in by directives. We are told what books to use, what workbooks, how much time to spend on this and that." They are perhaps somewhat less powerless than they think they are but everything they hear about education must make them feel like, as I say, the lowest buck private in a very big army, or the lowest employee in a very large corporation.

If education is going to be improved, I think we are going to have to realize that the most important people in it are, in the first place, the children and, in the second place, the teachers—with curriculum-makers, administrators, superintendents etc., coming in a very poor third.

Congressman Scheuer said to us that the schools in the suburban communities are doing the job. I think this is part of the folklore of contemporary thinking about education and most of what is said and written about our city schools seems to me to be pursuing the notion—"If we could just make them like suburban schools, our problems would be over;" and "If only we could find a way to do in our inner cities what we are doing in Scarsdale or Newton or Winnetka." Or you name it. But my experience, both as a student and as a teacher, has all been in supposedly good schools, and you have no idea how bad good schools are. (Applause and laughter) The learning that goes on in them is 90% fake, quickly forgotten, hardly ever applied, not relevant to anything. And, as a matter of fact, I think our problems in our cities arise from the fact that you can get away with bad education in the suburbs, because these kids are pretty docile and they can play the game—they very quickly learn what the school game is about. There is a big fat carrot out there in front of them, and a stick behind them. But this won't work in your inner cities. This won't work for your really deprived children. They don't believe in the carrot and they are not afraid of the stick. The schools can't do anything to them that is any worse than what happens to them everyday, and they very quickly know that—they won't play this silly game. It is all so foreign from their own experience. They don't understand a lot of the language in which the game is conducted, and they are thrown off by the quite obvious hostility of a lot of their teachers. But in any case they don't play, they won't play. I think our situation could very well be put this way: the only way we can "solve the problems of our inner-city schools" is by beginning to do some very hard thinking about what education really is, particularly for the child growing up in the city.

I would like to take a good roundhouse swing at testing in general, mostly just to make myself feel better. I know of no legitimate educational purpose that is served by testing of any kind. It seems to me that they are inherently useless, and more than that, bad. Winston Churchill said of his teachers at Harrow that they weren't interested in finding out what he knew, but what he didn't know. This is obviously true of a test. In order to get results that are of any use to you, if you want to pigeonhole people, you have to test ignorance, not knowledge. In an hour or 100 hours, a child can't express everything he understands, and everything he knows about the world, so you have to find out what he doesn't know. This is one part of it. These tests test glibness; they test an ability to put your understandings into words, or even worse, to say things whether you understand them or not—and college and graduate students know that as well as anybody else. That is what pays off. They test speed—that is, how fast can you get all this kind of stuff down. And they test the ability to read somebody else's mind.

Part of being successful at taking tests of any kind is this ability to outguess the tester, to try to guess what he wants. In fact, this is a large part of what the school game is about, but this has nothing to do with real knowledge and understanding. So, generally

speaking, I am in favor of throwing them out. I say they impede learning. When you are learning something, you are really pursuing your own curiosity and the things you learn seep down. They take a long while to make some kind of coherent pattern of things. When you are continually obliged to be repeating back for somebody else's benefit, this kind of real learning does not go on.

Harold Taylor, Vice Chairman of the NCSPS, summarized the proceedings at the end. In the course of his summary, he said:

I have three points to make. The first is that in my experience this has been the hardest group to stop talking that I've ever been connected with. Every session we had, we had trouble closing, and I suppose if we're going to run into defects, that's the kind to run into. Anybody who is worried about the vitality of the interest on the part of American citizens in public education should have been here.

Jim Scheuer had trouble shutting us down this morning when all we were trying to do was show Ralph Tyler that his project was either useless and would produce no results worth having, or that it would produce results which were therefore dangerous. We did hear some marvelous talk this morning particularly, with Ralph Tyler, John Holt, Nancy Larrick, Jim Scheuer, and Martin Mayer giving an absolutely first-rate discussion of the content and philosophy of education— regardless of whether or not we helped Ralph change his mind.

Secondly, I would like to point out that as was the case with the poor confronting the semi-rich last week, when Sargent Shriver came and tried to subdue the poor, we have our own version. When the discussion of citizens making public policy came up yesterday in Panel 2, Dr. Hypps pointed to the incidents of last week here and said that it was perfectly natural for the hostilities and feelings of aggression to appear in public. Let's take it for granted, she said, that the hostility was not directed at any one person. It was just hostility that had to find its own target. Well this time, there was an absolutely extraordinary degree of criticism of the schools starting with Richardson Dilworth's and Phil Hauser's remarks. You will recall that Dr. Hauser said that the superintendents are authoritarian and useless, the school boards are antiquated, the principals are venal, and we've got to keep an eye on the government. And he cited references, usually in Chicago, to support every one of his generalizations.

That started it off and if you look at this with a psychoanalytic eye you find that the membership of our Committee has a collective unconscious of extraordinary proportions. This collective unconscious which has been bubbling now for four years, with the help of new members each year who added their own unconsciousness to the general welter, really got bubbling this time, and in almost every session there were people expressing downright hostility to the condition of the public schools. It reached a high point with Phil Hauser, but another point was made by Jules Feiffer last night when he was talking about what he learned from going to school.

"I learned," he said, "a number of useful things. I learned to stay out of the way of grownups, while at the same time desperately wanting to be one. Grownups, as

I understood it, didn't have to take gym."

Mr. Feiffer learned how to fold the New York Times as a preparation for life in the subway. The kind of deep criticism of the content and quality of public education in the United States, which we have heard, would raise the hair on the head of any superintendent, principal, or chairman of a school board. My third point is this. The strength of interest, the degree of knowledge, and the quality of determination which I have seen here over these past two days has been extraordinary. I believe the Committee, after its first four years, has reached a level of strength and devotion to the cause which now has its own inner momentum. I congratulate you on everything you have done to create that momentum and to keep it going.

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